DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 224 380 HE 015 643

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TITLE Perceptions of Black and White Students on Extracurricular Participation and Discrimination at a Large Southern University.
SPONS AGENCY Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge.
PUB DATE [79]
NOTE 16p.; This paper was identified by a joint project of the Institute on Desegregation at North Carolina Central University and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Alienation; *Black Students; *College Desegregation; College Environment; *Extracurricular Activities; Higher Education; Institutional Research; Racial Bias; *Racial Discrimination; Racial Relations; Student Attitudes; Student College Relationship; *Student Participation; *Whites
IDENTIFIERS *Louisiana State University

ABSTRACT

Black student attitudes about Louisiana State University (LSU) and their participation in extracurricular activities were studied and compared to those of white students. Questionnaires were mailed to the approximately 1,400 black students attending LSU and an equal number of white students, and responses were obtained from 129 black and 114 white students. A lower participation rate in extracurricular activities was found for black students compared to white students. Black students participated significantly less in: professional, career, or honorary groups; on-campus football games; on-campus religious services; and classes. Blacks appeared to substitute off-campus activities, probably at Southern University, for LSU on-campus activities. Black students perceived discrimination from faculty members significantly more than did white students, and more often felt that less discrimination and more acceptance would increase their participation in extracurricular activities, as would more information about the extracurricular activities. In addition, black students more often felt that an outreach program for recruitment would enhance black participation, and that organizations of activities interesting black students would help induce black participation. Whites preferred predominantly white organizations, while blacks preferred mixed groups. While a large groups of blacks wanted the administration to further integrate on-campus activities, an equally large number advocated the formation of exclusively black organizations. (SW)

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PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS ON EXTRACURRICULAR PARTICIPATION AND DISCRIMINATION AT A LARGE SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY [1]

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COOPERATIVE PROJECT

This paper has been identified by a joint project of The Institute on Desegregation at North Carolina Central University and ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at George Washington University. The purposes of this project are to identify, collect, and make available literature concerned with

(1) the problems of minority students in higher education in general and
(2) the problems of desegregation in historically black colleges and universities in particular.

New published and unpublished materials are reviewed and recommended by participants of the Institute on Desegratation's Interinstitutional Research Group (ID/IRG) for acquisition by ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education. An annual bibliography of this material will be published under the names of ERIC and the Institute.

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The purpose of this research was threefold; (1) to quantify the lower participation rate of black students compared to that of white students in on-campus extracurricular activities at a large southern university; (2) to explore the phenomenon, focusing on underlying reasons; and (3) to offer some suggestions of actions that could be taken to enhance black participation. Blacks in the student population were significantly less involved in on-campus activities and more involved in off-campus activities than whites. Black students also perceived greater discrimination by administrators than did whites. Whites preferred predominantly white organizations, while blacks preferred mixed groups. A large group of blacks wanted the administration to further the integration of on-campus activities, while an equally large number advocated the formation of exclusively black organizations.

The Council on Campus Minorities at Louisiana State University perceived that black students on campus had a lower extracurricular participation rate than non-black students. The council commissioned the authors to quantify this lower participation rate and to determine underlying reasons for the phenomenon.

Black students in higher education programs numbered 200,000 in 1960, 500,000 in 1970 and 1,062,000 in 1977. Of this 1977 figure, 60% are enrolled in two-year community and junior colleges or vocational and technical schools. Of the remaining 40%, half attend one of the 144 predominantly black colleges or universitites, while the other half are in predominantly white institutions. Not only has the black college student population increased, but the percentage of black students on white campuses has also risen. Since the 1954 Supreme Court school desegregation decision, blacks have attained an average of approximately 5% of the enrollment in predominantly white colleges and universities (Poinsett, 1978).

Although these black students entered white universities with hope and great expectations (Babbit, Burback and Thompson, 1975), their expectations were not clearly defined. This may have been due to parental indifference, ignorance or fear concerning a college education (Vontress, 1968). Concerning extracurricular activities, they expected a diversity of activities and life styles. These students had developed interests based on their own cultural milieu and were often unfamiliar with the values and behavior of middle class white students (Gibbs, 1978).

What has been the experience of the black students? The literature indicates that it has been a difficult one. Walker (1977) found evidence that institutional alienation is the most significant characteristic of black students' experiences. Such factors as racial imbalance, being dissociated from the course material, inadequate teacher-black student communication and perceived indifference from white faculty and students has contributed to the black student feeling of insecurity and has hindered the educational process. Babbit, Burback and Thompson (1975) have similarly concluded "that blacks and other minorities are alienated from the various organizational structures that make up the institutions of higher education."

In addition to alienation, black students have encountered discrimination and racism. Harper (1969) stated that black students are no longer willing to accept "white-washing by a university that is irrelevant to their needs." In April, 1979, Dartmouth College had to cancel classes because of student protest. The main reason underlying the protest was "charges of racism" by Dartmouth's black students. "Separatism may be on the wane but separation--partly voluntary, partly imposed by the white student majority--lives on (Time, April 16, 1979)."

These experiences of alienation, discrimination and racism make the personal adjustment to white universities as difficult as the academic adjustment. Peterson (1973) found black students at white colleges suffering from numerous personal, social and academic problems. Gibbs (1973) a black counselor at a predominantly white university, saw black students having "many problems of adjustment", the most frequent of which as "establishing a meaningful personal identity."

Gibbs (1974) investigated types of behavior black students at a predominantly white university employed in coping with their identity conflicts. Furthermore, she ascertained whether the different types of coping mechanisms were related to socio-economic status, high school integration, ability to handle academic tasks or feelings of self-adequacy.

She found four defenses:

(a) Withdrawal. This is characterized by apathy, depression, feelings of hopelessness, alienation and depersonalization, resulting in the student's withdrawal from the conflict producing situation.

(b) Separation. This is characterized by anger, hostility and conflicts in interpersonal relationships. This may be expressed as rejection of whites, contempt for middle-class values and behavior, and protest against white institutions.

(c) Assimilation. This is characterized by social anxiety, desire for acceptance and approval, conforming, compensatory overachievement, and increased sensitivity concerning ethnic references. These students may avoid contact with other blacks and may want to conceal their racial identity. There is an affinity for the dominant culture and a rejection of their own culture.

(d) Affirmation. This is characterized by self-acceptance, positive ethnic identity, achievement orientation and self-actualizing behavior. There is a movement with the dominant culture with acceptance of their own culture. Withdrawal was the most frequent coping mechanism in Gibbs's sample, regardless of the student's socio-economic class, previous high school integration or ability to handle academic tasks. However, sixty-one percent of those who felt inadequate used withdrawal; while 70% of those who felt adequate used affirmation.

Viewed comprehensively, these studies indicate that black students in predominantly white universities experience alienation, discrimination, a resulting emphasizing of their search for identity and the use of withdrawal separation, assimilation and affirmation as coping mechanisms. Since extra-curricular activities are a microcosm of the university, one would expect a similar process in connection with the extracurricular activities. While there have been a number of articles which theorize on the behavior of blacks on white campuses, there have been few empirical studies. This research study focuses on black extracurricular behavior and the underlying reasons for it.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study are based on the literature discussed in the previous section. The general findings of this body of literature have been extended to apply to the specific experience of the black student in a predominantly white university.

Main hypothesis: There is a lower participation rate by black students at Louisiana State University in extracurricular activities than by white students. This a function of withdrawal by the black students.

Auxillary hypotheses:

H_2 Black students experience discrimination at the university more than white students.

H_3 Black students feel more alienated at the university than white students.

H_4 Black students perceive activities on campus as catering more to the white population.

H_5 Blacks fulfill their social needs by involvement in activities on other campuses.

H_6 Black students have formed separate sub-groups to meet their social needs.

H_7 Black students perceive the low participation of black students in extra-curricular activities on campus as more of a problem than white students do.

H_8 Black students support the promotion of exclusive black organizations and activities on the LSU campus. This is an example of separation behavior.

Methodology

A four page questionnaire consisting of twenty-eight items (twenty-four for the white students) was developed. The questionnaires were distributed through the mail with return postage.

The first part of the questionnarires contained demographic information. Next, amount of participation in on-campus and off-campus activities and organizations was assessed. Included were items determining reasons for non-participation. Experiences of racial discrimination from different authorities and knowledge of grievance procedures were then ascertained. Respondents were also asked their perceptions concerning the low participation of black students in activities, their perception of black students in activities, their perception of the population to which such activities cater to, and their feelings toward participation of one race with the other. Questions about the administrative acts which could be taken to alleviate the problem were then asked. Preferences in participation with one's same or opposite race members were asked, and the students were also asked how different combinations of racial participation in an activity would effect their participation. Finally, two open-ended questions were asked to determine: (1) what activities students would like to have; and (2) potential solutions and other opinions they have regarding the low participation of black students in extracurricular activities.

Questionnaires were mailed to all black students attending LSU (approximately 1400), with the exclusion of foreign blacks. An equal population of whites was also selected. A proportionate stratified sampling technique, based on the characterisitcs of the black student population, was used to draw the white population. The white population was stratified by academic class (freshman through Ph.D.), sex, full or part-time student status and commuter or dormitory residence.

One hundred and twenty-nine questionaries were returned from the black student population and 114 were returned from the white student population. This consituted a return rate of 9% of the total population.

Results

The data were divided into two sets, one set composed of closed-ended items from the questionnaire and the other set composed of content analyzed responses to the open-ended items. Several of the closed-ended items were broken down into dummy variables consisiting of yes/no responses to non-continuous response categories. Race of respondent was utilized as the single independent variable in the study. The multivariate analysis of variance test for the closed-ended set was highly significant [F (42,105) = 11.25, $p < .0001$]. The multivariate test for the content analyzed items was also significant [F (26.2]3}= 3.26, $p < .0001$].

Twenty-five significant differences (eighteen from the first group, seven from the second group) were found between the responses of the white and black students. The multivariate analysis required the reduction of respondents on the first set of items from 243 to 148 due to missing data.

These significant results may be divided into several broad categories described below.

(1) Participation in on-campus activities

Blacks were less involved in professional, career or honorary groups than whites [F (1,146) = 4.27, $p < .05$]. Whites attended on-campus football games [F (1,146) = 9.986, $p < .01$] and on-campus religious services [F (1,146)= 8.08, $p < .01$] more often than blacks.

(2) Participation in off-campus activities

Blacks substituted off-campus activities (probably at nearby Southern University) for on-campus activities. Evidence for this conclusion was found in that black students participate significantly more often than whites in social activities on another campus [F (1,146) - 5.07, $p < .05$], athletic events on another campus [F (1,146) = 4.47 $p < .05$] and entertainment activities on another campus [F (1,146) = 4.86, $p < .05$].

(3) Perceptions on black participation

Black students more often than white students perceived that on-campus activities catered primarily to white students [F (1,146)=65.15, $p < .001$]. Over 80% of the black students believed that on-campus activities catered primarily to whites, while only 38% of the white students agreed. On the other hand, one half of the white students believed that the activities catered to whites and blacks equally, while only 6% of the black students believed this.

No respondent to the survey felt that on-campus activities catered primarily to blacks.

Black students felt significantly more accepted when participating with predominantly white groups than white students felt while participating with predominantly black groups [F (1,146) = 20.39, p <.0001]. Thirty percent of the white students responded that they felt excluded when participating in activities with predominantly black persons, as compared to 13% of the black students when participating in activities with predominantly white individuals.

Black students perceive low black participation in on-campus activities as more of a problem than do white students [F (1,146) = 126.59, p < .0001].

(4) Discrimination

Significantly more blacks experienced racial discrimination by a faculty member than did whites [F (1,146) = 10.02, p < .01]. Relatively few students reported racial discrimination by faculty members: eighty-five percent of the total population responded that they had not experienced discrimination. Of those students who responded that they had experienced racial discrimination by a faculty member, black students had experienced it more often than white students [F (1.146) = 6.03, p < .05].

(5) Reasons for not joining

White students responded significantly more often than black students that they did not participate in student organizations because they lacked interest in those organizations [F (1,146) = 7.65, p < .01]. Twenty percent of the white students responded that they were not interested in the activities compared to 8% of the black students.

On the other hand, black students, more often than white students, did not participate in student activities because they were not informed of those activities [F (1,146) = 12.76 p < .001]. Thirty-three percent of the black students felt this was an important reason for their non-participation as compared to only 11% of the white students.

(6) Administrative acts which could help

Black and white students were asked which administrative actions could be taken to enhance black participation in on-campus activities. Black students, more often than white students, felt that an outreach program for recruitment would enhance black participation. [F (1,146) = 9.80, p < .01].

Thirty-seven percent of the black students agreed with this action compared to only 13% of the white students.

Black students, more often than white students, also felt that the LSU administration should promote exclusively black organizations and activities to increase on-campus participation [F (1,146) =40.85, p <.0001]. Thirty-six percent of the black students agreed with this action compared to less than one percent of the white students.

(7) Suppositions

Black students, more often than white students, indicated that they would become more active in campus activities if there were a greater participation by blacks in those campus activities [F (1,146) = 150.81, p < .0001]. Black and white students were asked if they would prefer to participate in activities with predominantly white students, an equal black/white ratio, or with predominantly black students. There was a significant difference in the response of the students [F (1,146) = 101.78, p < .0001], such that white students prefer predominantly white groups while black students prefer an equal black/white ratio.

(8) Content analysis of open-ended questions

A content analysis was performed on the students' answers to the two open-ended questions. The results of the statistical analysis of this data corroborate the results from the structured items. Selected findings include: (1) blacks suggest significantly more often than whites that advertisement of activities would help induce black participation in extracurricular activities on campus; (2) blacks suggest more often than whites that organization of activities interesting black students specifically would help induce black participation; (3) black students suggest more often than whites that less discrimination and prejudice and more acceptance between races would help induce more participation of black students; (4) whites respond more often than blacks that there is an equal opportunity for black students to participate in on-campus activities if they choose to do so; (5) white students would like to see a greater variety of activities on-campus in general without reference to the black/white ratio; (6) black students want more exclusively black organizations and activities on campus.

Discussion

All but one of the hypotheses were confirmed by the data. The major

hypothesis, that there is a lower participation rate by black students at LSU in extracurricular activites than by white students, was confirmed by several findings. Black students participate significantly less in professional, career or honorary groups; in on-campus football games; in on-campus religious services; and in classes than their white classmates. Blacks appear to substitute off-campus activities, probably at Southern University, for these on-campus activities. This behavior is characteristic of the withdrawal defense described by Gibbs (1974) in her study of black behaviour at predominantly white universities.

The second hypothesis, that black students experience discrimination at the university more than white students, was also supported. Black students perceive discrimination from faculty members significantly more than white students. Of those students who perceived discrimination by faculty members, black students reported a significantly higher frequency than white students. Content analysis of the open-ended questions futher confirmed that hypothesis. Black students responded significantly more often than whites that less discrimination and more acceptance would increase their participation in extracurricular activities. These perceptions of discrimination by blacks are congruent with those expressed by Harper (1969), Joseph (1969), and Miller (1969) in their earlier articles on blacks in white universities.

Indirect evidence for the third hypothesis, that blacks feel more alienated at the university than whites, can be found in the data. Black students stated significantly more often than whites that they do not belong to student organizations because they are not informed of the activities of those organizations. A significant indicator of alienation from an organization is lack of information about that organization. Further corroboration of this point comes from the fact that more blacks than whites feel that additional advertisement and an active outreach recruitment program would increase participation by blacks.

Further indirect evidence for the alienation hypothesis may be found in the direct support for hypothesis four, that black students perceive activities on campus as catering more to the white population. There is a large disparity between white and black perceptions on this point. Black students believe that activities on campus cater more to the white population; white students believe that the activities cater equally to whites and blacks. Significantly, both blacks and whites agree unanimously that activities do not

cater primarily to blacks, or to blacks more than whites. The fact that blacks do not see on-campus activities as catering to them indicates alienation from those activities.

The fifth hypothesis was that blacks fulfill their social needs by involvement in activities on other campuses. As noted above, this hypothesis was strongly confirmed by the fact that blacks have a higher involvement in several types of off-campus behaviour than whites.

Strong evidence was gathered supporting hypothesis seven, that black students perceive the low participation of black students in extracurricular activities on campus as more of a problem than white students do. While significantly more black students see the low participation as a problem than whites, significantly more whites than blacks believe that blacks have an equal opportunity to become involved in activities and can do so if they want. Since whites have this perception of equal opportunity for all, it is understandable why they do not see low black participation as a problem. The fact that whites prefer to be in organizations that are primarily white further explains their lack of concern with the problem.

The hypothesis that black students support the promotion of exclusively black organizations and activities is confirmed by several responses. Black students responded affirmatively on three separate questions (administrative acts that would help participation, solutions to the problem in the content analysis section, and types of activities that they would like) indicating that they want to have exclusively black activities and organizations on campus. Furthermore, they stated that they would specifically like to have black sororities and fraternities. This is an example of what Gibbs (1974) calls separation behavior.

In general, the data indicate that three separate, but related, processes are occuring:

(1) The white students want to maintain the status quo-a preponderance of white students in extracurricular activities. This may be due to white students feeling anxious when participating in groups with a larger percentage of blacks than white students. White students prefer more whites in extracurricular activities and do not enjoy interacting in predominantly black groups.

(2) One portion of the black student community wants to increasingly integrate the on-campus activities. These students responded that they prefer more blacks

in extracurricular activities and that they would become more active if there were a greater percentage of blacks involved in them. This portion of the black community also wants the formation of an outreach or recruitment program and more advertising of activities.

(3) Another portion of the black students prefer exclusively black activities and organizations, such as black sororities and fraternities. The attitudes of these students compliment those of many white students: they will go to a university which enrolls both blacks and whites, but they prefer a segregated social life.

The situation for the black students described in the discussion parallels Miller's (1969) statements concerning the struggles with a societally programmed conflict and the resluting emphasis on a conscious search for identity by black students on the white campus. While the black student gains entry into the white university as an equal, he soon perceives discrimination and activities that cater to the white student. This dual message--equality and discrimination--causes tension which exacerbates the identity conflict (Gibbs, 1974). Because this search for identity is combined with academic adjustment to the university, coping mechanisms of withdrawal, separation and assimilation are often needed. Black students going off campus for their extracurricular activities exemplify withdrawal. Those wanting more black students in extracurricular activities exemplify assimilation. Those wanting exclusively black organizations exemplify separation. Which response the black student makes is probably determined by a complex set of causes: previous positive or negative exposure to the predominantly white culture, current social resources and opportunities for interaction, and future ambitions or goals.

[1] This research paper is an extension of a masters' research report entitled "A Survey of Extracurricular Black Student Participation at LSU, Baton Rouge, in 1979" by Deidra Larche and William Meriwether and supervised by Charles Teddlie. The authors wish to thank the LSU Council on Campus Minorities for their financial support for the project.

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